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NEA/MAG FOR HOPKINS AND HARRIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/08/2017
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [TS](#)
SUBJECT: TUNISIAN COURT BANS TUNISIAN HUMAN RIGHTS LEAGUE
CONGRESS

REF: A. 06 TUNIS 2688

[1](#)B. 05 TUNIS 2113

Classified By: Ambassador Robert F. Godec for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) On February 17, a Tunis court delivered a long-pending verdict in a case against the Tunisian Human Rights League, barring the organization from holding its national congress. While pro-GOT plaintiffs in the case hope that the ruling will force LTDH leadership to concede and allow pro-GOT members into the organization, it is likely that the standoff will continue.

[1](#)2. (SBU) On February 17, a Tunis court rendered a long-pending verdict in a case against the Tunisian Human Rights League, deciding that the organization could not hold its national congress. The decision was delivered by the civil chamber of the Court of First Instance in Tunis, more than a year after twenty-two pro-GOT members of the LTDH filed a suit against the current LTDH steering committee, led by Mokhtar Trifi, alleging "abuse of power and violations of association regulations." The LTDH was previously subject to a provisional judgment, delivered on the eve of a proposed national congress in September 2005 (ref B), which also barred the group from holding a congress.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Plaintiffs in the case, led by pro-GOT lawyer Chedli Ben Younes, expressed satisfaction at the verdict. Younes claimed that the judgment would force Trifi and other LTDH executive committee members to reverse policies, such as consolidating regional sections of the LTDH, that are widely believed to have been carried out in an attempt to rid the LTDH of ruling party RCD sympathizers within the League's ranks. Independent Tunisian civil society organizations, such as the National Council for Liberties in Tunisia (CNLT), joined Trifi in claiming the decision was a further step in trying to limit the independence of the LTDH, and preventing the association from conducting its normal activities. CNLT President Siham Ben Sedrine noted that the decision followed years of oppressive tactics used by the GOT against the LTDH, including harassment against League officials, surveillance, interference, and prevention of LTDH meetings by police. The GOT continued to repeat its long-standing talking point that the LTDH legal affair was "an internal matter."

[1](#)4. (SBU) Meanwhile, after months of a moratorium on League activities, wherein all LTDH meetings in Tunis and in regional cities were prevented by police (ref A), the LTDH was allowed to hold a seminar on March 8 at its headquarters in Tunis. Between 50-60 diplomats and league members attended the seminar, albeit under heavy police surveillance.

[1](#)5. (C) Comment: The recent ruling further shows that the GOT is determined to ensure that the LTDH under its current

leadership not solidify its status by conducting a national congress. While Ben Younes has suggested taking the dispute to a third party mediator, it is likely that the standoff, which each side sees in zero-sum terms, will continue. Meanwhile, Tunisia continues to suffer from the loss of a credible, independent human rights organization that can effectively, and without interference, monitor domestic human rights abuses and promote respect for human rights.

GODEC